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SUBJECT: USUNESCO -- DRAFT DECLARATION FOR
INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE SOCIAL SCIENCE - POLICY
NEXUS TO BE HELD IN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY, FEBRUARY 20-
24, 2006

1. This is an action request, see para. 4.

2. The following is the draft declaration for the International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus to be held in Argentina and Uruguay February 20-24, 2006. The meeting is being organized by Unesco's Social Science Sector as part of its Management of Social Transformations (MOST) program. The conference website says, " For five days, more than a thousand participants (academics, decision-makers and civil society actors) are expected to attend the meetings in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Cordoba and Montevideo, to discuss the way in which social science research can accompany the decision-making process and encourage the development of innovative social science projects." The website can be found at:
http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8667&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

3. Begin text:

Draft Buenos Aires Declaration calling for a new approach to the social science - policy nexus

Taking note of the Declaration of the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and of flagship reports on human development and equality by United Nations agencies and by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

Sharing the concern expressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his foreword to the 2005 Millennium Development Goals Report that "If current trends persist, there is a risk that many of the poorest countries will not be able to meet many of the Millennium Development Goals. Considering how far we have come, such a failure would mark a tragically missed opportunity. This report shows that we have the means at hand to ensure that nearly every country can make good on the promises of the Goals. Our challenge is to deploy those means."

Taking into consideration the Lisbon and Vienna Declarations on Social Sciences, both of which stress the indispensable contribution of social science to the social development objectives of the international community.

The International Forum on the Social Science - Policy Nexus, at its closing plenary session in Buenos Aires on February 24 2006, hereby offers its own diagnosis of contemporary challenges as they relate to the relations between social science and policy, and sets out and endorses an action plan to revitalize those relations.

The erosion of the universal thrust of human rights, human dignity and justice under the pressure of contemporary social and economic transformations is a matter of urgent concern. The Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals are not the ambitious statement of new moral purpose. They are the minimum threshold compatible with the proclaimed values of the international community. Failure to make serious progress towards achieving them would entail both moral bankruptcy and practical disaster.

The means required to meet these challenges include, crucially, moral vision and political will. In addition, however, this Forum expresses its conviction that the challenges call for new knowledge used in innovative ways and the better use of existing knowledge. In this regard, the social sciences have a crucial contribution to make.

Hunger and poverty, education, health, the environment, and development - the five areas to which the eight Millennium Development Goals relate -, are social dynamics. None is solely within the purview of social

science, but without social science none is fully intelligible. Yet prejudice, dogma and spurious common sense too often crowd out rigorous social science research from policy design. The result is policies that fail, even in their own terms, prolonging avoidable human misery.

This Forum states its conviction that better use of rigorous social science can lead to more effective policies. Such use requires a new approach to the links between social science and policies for social development. For the knowledge that social science seeks is precisely the knowledge that policy needs.

It is with these urgent concerns and this diagnosis in mind that this Forum adopts the following action plan and commends it to the attention of the international community.

- 1) The Forum encourages the establishment of new networks to bring together policy-makers, researchers and civil society around their shared concern for the urgent demands of global social development.
- 2) The networks should encourage cooperation and exchange of information, research results and best practices with respect to the inclusion of policy relevance within project design and, to this end, should promote the development of innovative institutional arrangements and tools to facilitate linkages between research and policy communities.
- 3) Recognizing the need for genuinely international and interdisciplinary social science research sensitive to policy concerns, the networks should facilitate cooperation in enhancing existing funding programmes for international social science research and in developing new modalities for productive work across disciplinary and national boundaries.
- 4) Recognizing the need for policy-makers to be sensitive to research that questions existing thinking, the networks set up in response to this call should promote the sensitivity of policy-makers to critical and alternative social science research.
- 5) The networks should pay particular attention to assisting developing country institutions, especially in Africa, in meeting their research needs and in restoring and ultimately enhancing their capacity to implement their social policy priorities.
- 6) In order to perform their functions, the networks should be equipped with adequate Secretariats drawing on resources provided by all institutions committed to the spirit of this Declaration. The networks should consider, inter alia, follow-up events of a similar nature to this Forum and publication of reports on social science for social development policy in order to provide a focus for ongoing debates on paradigms, tools and practices and to draw together the full range of activity at the interface between academic and policy communities.
- 7) The Forum commends this action plan to the attention of all relevant United Nations agencies and calls on them, along with national governments and other appropriate bodies, to endorse it and to provide it with such support and encouragement as may be appropriate.

14. Comment and action request: We note some troubling language in this declaration. For example, the preamble states that the erosion of the "thrust" of human rights et al. is caused by "social and economic transformations"-ignoring the effect of autocratic regimes and implying that globalization and economic freedom are the cause of human rights violations, rather than their the best guarantor. We also are concerned by the reference to the MDGs as the "minimum threshold" and that failure to meet them represents "moral bankruptcy and practical disaster." Please provide guidance on how to react to this document.

KOSS